



Partner for Cape Breton-Victoria, Strait Schools

Department of Education and Culture (to July 99)

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Ashford Investments is the preferred partner to build 13 schools with the Cape Breton-Victoria and Strait regional school boards.

In making the announcement today, Education and Culture Minister Robbie Harrison said: "School construction is on target. We're now ready to build as quickly as Ashford Investments can work with school boards and communities, and get the schools under way."

New schools for Cape Breton-Victoria are: River Ryan Elementary; South Mira; Whitney Pier Elementary; Ingonish Consolidated; North of Smokey Elementary; and Sydney Mines Elementary. New schools for the Strait are: Central Inverness International Academy; North Inverness Education Centre/Academy; East Antigonish Education Centre/Academy; Richmond Academy; Central Inverness Education Centre; South Inverness Education Centre; and West Antigonish Education Centre. Project details and scheduling can now be discussed with the school boards. At the same time, lease and financing arrangements will be finalized.

"I am absolutely delighted that this process is moving forward," said Jack Sullivan, Strait school board superintendent. "Students are excited about the prospect of new schools, which are urgently needed."

"We are elated at having our partner appointed," said Hayes MacNeil, superintendent of the Cape Breton-Victoria board. "Our parents' and citizens' groups have worked hard over the past two years to get our new schools constructed. I know they, too, are satisfied to see their hard work bear fruit. We can't wait for construction to start."

Ashford Investments is currently in a partnership with the Chignecto-Central Regional School Board to build the new Amherst Regional High. The firm is the first to reach a development agreement with the province based on a predetermined all-inclusive price, covering not only construction, but operating, maintenance and new technology costs for 20 years. All leases will now be based on a predetermined all-inclusive price, meaning stable, predictable costs for school boards, and risk-sharing arrangements consistent with recommendations by the auditor general.

School board and community project teams will continue to be a strength in planning for all new schools. Teams of school board and government representatives evaluated detailed proposals by a short list of partners, leading to these decisions. Mr. Harrison thanked school board staff and members for their time and commitment over the summer. The superintendents and four staff for each of the boards served on two separate evaluation teams.

Along with new school construction, the department is working with school boards on project details and scheduling of renovation projects to be carried out over the next three years.

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